



Fundacion Mi Cutisa brings internationally acclaimed film “Zulaika” to Aruba

On Tuesday, June 6, the 2003 film “Zulaika,” produced by Norman de Palm of Curacao, and directed by Diederik van Rooijen, will premier in Aruba at the Cas di Cultura. Completely in Papiamentu, “Zulaika; Coming of Age in Curacao,” has received plaudits from critics around the world, having been screened at a number of film festivals, including the Chicago International Children's Film Festival, which is the largest film festival for children in North America.

Attending the premier will be the producer of the film, Norman de Palm, the actresses that portray the title character, Zulaika and her grandmother, Shurmaily Martina and Mila Palm, and the screenwriter Milushka Birge, who has also acted in a number of films. Zulaika is Mr. Birge's first screenwriting credit.

The film paints a vivid picture of life in Curacao, and the determination of a thirteen year old girl to achieve a better life for her and her family. The story begins with Zulaika's mother across the sea in Holland, working and finding a house for the two of them, so in the meantime Zulaika lives with her deaf grandfather and kindly grandmother in Curaçao. The family is poor, and the other children tease Zulaika for her tattered school uniform and for not being able to pay tuition. For her grandparents' sake as well as her own, Zulaika wishes their fish shop were more lucrative, but it will take more than good sales to boost this business. Her grandmother is such a softie that she can't resist extending credit to customers who never pay their bills, or lending money to Zulaika's selfish aunt. It is up to clever Zulaika to come up with a resourceful plan to get her family's feet on the ground

The Fundacion Mi Cutisa, named for a sandal that is native to the three islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao is devoted to the promotion of local culture and with the sponsorship of various local vendors has arranged for the showing of the film in Aruba. During a press conference held at Wendy's last Friday, producer Norman de Palm, who was on the island for a brief visit was joined by Asja Dongen and Nathalie Lacle representing Mi Cutisa in announcing the screening. Joining them was Giovanni Bermudez of Wendy's, the principle sponsor in bringing the film to Aruba and he took the moment to declare that the management of Wendy's “believes strongly in supporting island culture and is very proud to be involved in this project.” UNOCA, the agency that sponsors the publication and promotion of cultural pursuits in Papiamentu is also involved, as is Tiara Air, which is providing free passage for the filmmakers and the Millennium Resort, which will host them.

Zulaika has been screened at various film festivals in Argentina, Istanbul, Melbourne, Australia, and Korea, aside from Chicago. It has received acclaim around the world, including a Certificate of Excellence from the jury of the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. It's touching story is told without being overly sentimental, and it presents a strong, smart and determined young woman who is an excellent role model for many island children. The members of Mi Cutisa strongly encourage all families to attend the screening that will take place over Tuesday and Wednesday, June 6 and 7. The premier on Tuesday will be at 8:00 P.M., preceded by a wine and cheese party where attendees will have an opportunity to meet and talk with the filmmakers and actresses. On Wednesday there will be three showings, a 5:30 P.M matinee, specially priced for children, and shows at 7:30 and 9:30 P.M.

UNOCA is conducting a special screening for schools on Thursday and Friday, June 8 and 9 at 8:00 and 10:00 AM; educators that are interested are advised to contact Robert Schaarbaai of the Instituto di Cultura at telephone # 582-2154.

Tickets for the public screenings are available in the offices of the Cas di Cultura Monday through Friday from 11:00 AM to 5:00 P.M. Tickets are also being sold at the Plaza Bookshop in town and in Noord and the offices of Mirto Tromp, across from the Dr. Horacio Oduber Hospital.